

Message

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U.S. News Clips

March 5, 2020

- [Reuters: Backed by industry, several U.S. states propose blocking cities from banning natural gas](#)
- [Kallanish Energy: US hit record natural gas consumption in 2019: EIA](#)
- [Mondaq: United States: The Energy Edge: Department Of Energy Set To Boost LNG Exports By Authorizing Four New Export Projects In Texas](#)

March 4, 2020

- [The Hill: Senate seeks massive permanent boost in conservation funding](#)
- [San Antonio Express News: Commentary: Here comes the Texas sun](#)
- [AJ News: Ducey: Improving SR-189 Means Better Roads, Better Future for Arizona](#)
- [Border Report: South Texas lawmakers propose speeding up commercial traffic as Trump OKs adding border ag inspectors](#)
- [Yucatan Times: The extent of business mistrust in Mexico](#)
- [CSR Wire: Wastewater Is a Source of Valuable Water, Energy and Nutrients: How Do We Recover It?](#)

March 3, 2020

- [LNG Industry: Annova LNG signs lease with Port of Brownsville](#)
- [Natural Gas Intel: Grupo Carso Mexico Natural Gas Pipeline Delayed but Relief in Permian Forecast as Wahalajara Nears Start](#)
- [KPBS: California Wants Feds To Address Cross-Border Sewage](#)

February 29, 2020

- [Brinkwire: US agents discover illegal smuggling tunnel spanning 30-feet running under the US and Mexico border](#)

February 27, 2020

- [Enid News: COLUMN: USMCA not necessarily better than NAFTA](#)

Backed by industry, several U.S. states propose blocking cities from banning natural gas
[Nichola Groom, Richard Valdmanis / Reuters](#)

Lawmakers in at least five U.S. states have proposed bills since mid-February to prevent cities from banning natural gas as an energy source in new buildings, marking an escalation in the national battle over the fuel's role in fighting climate change.

The new bills, backed by business and utility interests, come as a growing number of cities in California and the Northeast vote to electrify their building sectors to avoid gas, a fossil fuel that contributes to global warming but which the drilling industry says is cleaner than alternatives like coal.

The stakes for the gas industry are huge: Direct gas consumption by residential and commercial buildings amounted to about 8.45 trillion cubic feet in 2018, rivaling the 10.63 tcf used by utilities to power the grid, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA).

The recent bills prohibiting such bans on gas use by buildings were introduced by lawmakers in Missouri, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Mississippi, many of them using near-identical language. Arizona last month became the first state in the country to pass such legislation.

The bills were supported by local and state chambers of commerce and businesses related to the gas industry.

The American Gas Association and the American Public Gas Association, U.S. trade groups representing gas utilities, have also publicly opposed local efforts to ban direct use of natural gas, but said they did not play a role in the state bills.

“Banning natural gas from communities, taking a clean energy solution away from people, is not going to accomplish our shared goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions,” said AGA President and CEO Karen Harbert in an emailed statement. Lawmakers sponsoring the new bills did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Rachel Golden, an official with the environmental group Sierra Club who advocates for building electrification, said the bills showed that “the industry is clearly rattled.”

The legislative push mirrors a similar clash between state lawmakers and local politicians that occurred years ago over hydraulic fracturing, with several municipalities seeking to ban the practice and states like Texas, Oklahoma, and Colorado passing laws to block them from doing so.

Those anti-ban moves sparked outrage among some local residents worried about earthquakes and pollution linked to fracking, and those who argued that local government rights to self-determination were being undermined.

The natural gas bills, meanwhile, come amid an intensifying debate over whether natural gas has a role in a climate friendly energy future. Research is mounting that natural gas contributes significantly to global warming by leaking from drilling, piping, compressing, and distribution infrastructure. Methane, the main component of natural gas, is many times more potent than carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas.

Leading Democratic candidates seeking to unseat President Donald Trump in the November election, meanwhile, have added pressure on the industry by proposing a rapid shift away from fossil fuels to fight global climate change.

The drilling industry, meanwhile, has countered with an ad blitz [here](#) pointing out that the U.S. power sector’s shift from coal-fired to natural gas-fired power plants has led to big decreases in greenhouse gas emissions over the last decade. Last July, the Northern California city of Berkeley kicked off a wave [here](#) of municipal efforts to electrify their building sectors by prohibiting natural gas in new buildings. Since then more than 20 other California cities have followed suit with similar ordinances.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-climatechange-naturalgas/backed-by-industry-several-u-s-states-propose-blocking-cities-from-banning-natural-gas-idUSKBN20S1G8>

[Back to News Index](#)

US hit record natural gas consumption in 2019: EIA

Staff / Kallanish Energy

U.S. natural gas production increased by 3% in 2019, hitting a record of 85.0 billion cubic feet per day, Kallanish Energy reports.

That information was released this week by the U.S. Department of Energy and its Energy Information Administration. The EIA said the domestic natural gas consumption was led by additional natural gas-fired electric capacity and lower natural gas prices.

U.S. gas consumption in the electric power sector grew by 2.0 billion cubic feet per day or about 7%, the EIA reported. But natural gas use in the commercial, residential and industrial sectors remained relatively flat in 2019, it said.

Exports by pipeline to Mexico and as liquefied natural gas (LNG) grew by 0.5 Bcf/d and 2.0 Bcf/d, respectively, in 2019, the EIA said.

In 2019, the electric power sector consumed 31.0 Bcf/ or 36% of total U.S. domestic natural gas consumption, it reported.

That electric power growth was largely in the U.S. mid-Atlantic region including Pennsylvania.

Coal produced 23% of electricity and nuclear power produced 20% of electric power.

About 5% of the U.S. total coal-fired capacity was retired in 2019 as gas replaces coal.

Natural gas consumption is largely driven by weather because natural gas is used in the winter to heat buildings and to cool them in the summer.

Natural gas demand in 2019 was similar to the 2018 demand, it said.

In the summer of 2019, high temperatures resulted in increased electric usage and natural gas consumption, it said. The U.S. set monthly records for U.S. electric power sector consumption of 41.1 Bcfd in July 2019 and of 41.6 Bcf/d in August 2019, it reported.

The electric power sector has been shifting toward natural gas for the last 10 years because of power prices for the gas, it added.

<https://www.kallanishenergy.com/2020/03/05/us-hit-record-natural-gas-consumption-in-2019-eia/>

[Back to News Index](#)

United States: The Energy Edge: Department Of Energy Set To Boost LNG Exports By Authorizing Four New Export Projects In Texas

Edward Hild , [Matthew Pitzarella](#) and [Kim Pizzigrilli](#) / Mondaq

U.S. exports of liquefied natural gas (LNG) have risen steadily over the past few years, and the Department of Energy (DOE) is taking steps to ensure that growth continues well into the future.

Last week, the DOE authorized the export of domestically produced LNG from four proposed LNG export projects in Texas – Annova LNG, Rio Grande LNG, and Texas LNG in Brownsville, TX; and Corpus Christi LNG's Stage III in in Corpus Christi.

In the announcement, DOE says these entities have authorization to export LNG "by ocean-going vessel to any country with which the U.S. does not have a free trade agreement requiring national treatment for trade in natural gas, and with which trade is not prohibited by U.S. law or policy." The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) authorized the siting, construction, and operation of these export projects back in November of 2019.

Right now, the U.S. is in the midst of its fourth straight year as a net exporter of natural gas and is now among the top global exporters of LNG. As of last year, the U.S. has exported LNG to 37 countries around the world, and some predict the industry will nearly double its export capacity by 2025. President Trump himself spent time in India this week pushing the U.S.'s significant supply of LNG. These energy-hungry markets need to secure energy from someplace, and the United States is in the fortunate position of being a global energy production powerhouse at a time when the natural gas industry is innovating through a challenging price environment.

Exporting More than Energy

We recently shared insights on an International Energy Agency (IEA) report that showed the U.S. was the global leader in emissions reductions in 2019 and played a significant role in global emissions remaining flat in 2019 after two consecutive years of increases. Much of this decrease was due to increased usage of natural gas in advanced economies, nuclear and solar.

By further enabling the growth and usage of LNG beyond its borders, it's possible the U.S. will be exporting more than just a valuable energy resource. It will be actively exporting emissions reductions as well.

The Edge: Challenges Still Remain in Exporting These "Molecules of Freedom"

The domestic benefits of LNG production have been well marked – energy security, cost savings, emissions reductions, infrastructure development, and job creation. The White House has referred to this as "molecules of freedom." The next logical step to continuing the growth of the natural gas industry is to expand its customer base beyond the U.S.'s immediate neighbors to the north and south. If the U.S. wants to be the global leader in energy and emissions reductions, exporting LNG worldwide is a smart way to get there. However, challenges still remain. The low-price environment and commoditization of LNG is making it more difficult to sign long-term deals with foreign buyers. It will be on lawmakers and producers to come together and ensure U.S. LNG supplies remain stable and financially attractive to fend off increasing competition from other sellers.

<http://www.mondaq.com/unitedstates/Energy-and-Natural-Resources/899880/The-Energy-Edge-Department-Of-Energy-Set-To-Boost-LNG-Exports-By-Authorizing-Four-New-Export-Projects-In-Texas>

[Back to News Index](#)

Senate seeks massive permanent boost in conservation funding

[Rebecca Beitsch](#) / The Hill

Conservation funding would get a dramatic boost under a coming bill from a bipartisan group of senators following a major policy reversal from President Trump.

The legislation would permanently direct \$900 million in oil and gas revenue to fully fund the popular Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), ensuring resources for a program Trump previously proposed gutting.

"There are very few things that we as legislators do that we can rightly say are permanent. This is one of those things where we're doing something for the people of America and for generations yet unborn that's going to make a real difference," said Sen. [Angus King](#) (I-Maine).

"It was said that this is the most important piece of conservation legislation in 50 years. I think it may even go beyond that," he added.

LWCF funds a variety of conservation efforts, such as securing land for parks. The legislation would be paired with a revived bill offering up \$6.5 billion to address a more than \$12 billion maintenance backlog at national parks. The bills could come to the floor as early as next week.

After years of similar efforts, an election-year reversal from Trump is giving lawmakers new momentum.

Despite suggesting cutting LWCF funds by as much as 97 percent year after year, including in his most recent budget proposal, Trump on Tuesday called for a bill to fully fund the program.

His Tuesday tweet specifically thanked Sen. [Cory Gardner](#) (R-Colo.), whose Senate seat is considered one of the most vulnerable of the 2020 election cycle. Sen. [Steve Daines](#) (R-Mont.) could also face a tough reelection campaign if former Montana Gov. [Steve Bullock](#) (D) enters the race, as [reported by The New York Times](#).

"While some may want to dwell on politics, I'm going to dwell on the good [that] the great outdoors does for the American people," Gardner said at a press conference, flanked by 11 other lawmakers.

With each lawmaker stressing the bipartisan backing behind the two pieces of legislation — 68 senators have signed on to the previous versions of one or both bills — Sen. [Joe Manchin](#) (D-W.Va.) defended Garner's long-held interest.

"When we drafted the bill, Cory was the first one to take the lead," Manchin said. "We're in a situation where we're in a crossroads right now. In our lifetime this has never happened. So we got to take advantage of this."

"So, politics be damned. Let's get it done," he said.

Since it was created in 1964, the LWCF has supported more than 42,000 projects, bolstering parks and expanding acres of conservation areas.

While the program was made permanent last year, its funding was not. And though lawmakers have repeatedly rejected Trump's suggestion to massively defund the program, they have not succeeded in fully funding it, instead securing about \$450 million last year.

Lawmakers seemed confident this year would be different given both presidential and bipartisan support.

"We have more than enough votes to move beyond anybody who raises an objection," Gardner said.

Lawmakers said they were able to convince Trump to reverse his opinion after a meeting where they showed pictures of various landscapes from their states that had benefited from LWCF money. Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) (R-Ky.) has agreed to fast-track the legislation.

"Somehow somebody worked a miracle," Sen. [Maria Cantwell](#) (D-Wash.) said, "because now all of a sudden a White House who hasn't been for land and water conservation funds ... is now seeing the light that this is a great economic investment for the future."

https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/486003-senate-seeks-massive-permanent-boost-in-conservation-funding?utm_source=&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=28015

[Back to News Index](#)

Commentary: Here comes the Texas sun

Matt Welch / San Antonio Express News

A new Texas energy source is figuratively (and literally) just over the horizon.

We are all too familiar with the hot Texas sun that can easily fry an egg on the sidewalk and sends us running into air conditioning. But that heat is energy, and with it comes the ability to generate the same electricity needed to drive those air conditioners we rely on to stay sane. And Texas sure has a lot of heat.

Given its massive solar resource, Texas has been somewhat slow — but catching up fast — to the game as we have opted to develop our oil, gas and wind resources first, but that is about to change. We won't stop developing those other energy sources, but a new source of energy is coming as demand growth is driven by a healthy economy.

Of the roughly 72,000 megawatts of solar deployed in the U.S., about 5 percent of it is installed in the Lone Star State.

About two-thirds of Texas' solar capacity is in large solar farms, such as the ones found mostly in West Texas, but a respectable one-third of solar is deployed on the rooftops of homes and businesses. In 2019, solar provided about 1 percent of the total amount of electricity we consumed in our homes and businesses.

Growth is expected in both types of solar, but the larger utility scale solar is poised to grow faster than ever. If all the projects in the development pipeline with signed grid interconnection agreements are deployed, Texas will increase its solar capacity by about five times in just two years — all without state mandates and as federal tax credits fade. Today's solar energy is enough to power about 400,000 Texas homes, but again, in just two years, that number could be as high as 1.5 million. This is great news for Texas as deployment means new revenue streams to help fix our roads and fund our schools — much like wind has done in West Texas.

With this growth in deployment comes job creation. The U.S. solar industry employed nearly 250,000 workers in 2019, an increase of 5,600 jobs since 2018, according to the 10th annual National Solar Jobs Census. Employment growth has been fueled by the rapid expansion of the U.S. solar industry, driven by the plummeting cost of solar technologies and its increased popularity with individuals, businesses and electric utilities. From 2014 to 2019, solar employment increased 44 percent, five times faster than job growth in the overall U.S. economy. Based on solar projects already in the planning stages, Texas jobs in the solar industry are going to skyrocket.

Why is this happening now? Because Texas is open for business. The competitive, deregulated Texas energy market allows it all to happen. Unlike some other states, we don't have onerous regulations. In Texas, we simply get out of the way and let the free market work its magic.

We are no stranger to utilizing different sources of energy, and, frankly, this is just another chapter in a long and proud energy history. Texas leads the nation in wind, oil, gas and just about every other type of energy under the sun — and we are about to start harvesting that in earnest as well.

It is only natural that Texas would take the lead in solar. We didn't set out to be a leader in clean energy, but we have always been an energy leader and, at the end of the day, when it hits your wall socket, clean energy is energy just the same.

https://www.expressnews.com/opinion/commentary/article/Commentary-Here-comes-the-Texas-sun-15105547.php?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=SAEN_DailyHeadlines&utm_term=news&utm_content=headlines#

[Back to News Index](#)

Ducey: Improving SR-189 Means Better Roads, Better Future for Arizona

\$134 million project to improve road connecting border and I-19

Staff /Apache Junction News

Governor Doug Ducey and state, local and federal officials today broke ground on a \$134 million project to improve mobility and safety on a 3.75-mile Nogales highway. The project, once completed, will help increase international trade coming through Nogales by linking the Mariposa Port of Entry and Interstate 19.

The Arizona Department of Transportation's upgrades along State Route 189, including flyover ramps connecting with the interstate, will eliminate the need for commercial trucks to stop as many as three times between I-19 and the international border as they travel to and from markets across Arizona and the U.S.

"We know that better roads mean a better future for Arizona," said Governor Ducey. "The improvements along State Route 189 will improve safety, enhance trade and foster an even stronger relationship with our neighbors in Mexico. With record trade already with Mexico, my thanks to the Arizona Department of Transportation, our partners in Mexico and everyone working to improve our infrastructure and attract even more trade through our ports."

The Mariposa Port of Entry saw about \$24.1 billion in imports and exports in 2018, including much of the winter produce consumed in the U.S. Up to 1,800 commercial trucks use SR 189 daily during the winter months.

Governor Ducey hosted officials at a groundbreaking event near the interchange of I-19 and SR 189, known locally as Mariposa Road. Construction is expected to begin in April and take about 18 months to complete.

A \$25 million appropriation by the state of Arizona as well as a highly competitive \$25 million federal Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant will allow ADOT to build the entire project at once, rather than in two phases. The expedited timeline will result in a savings of \$13 million.

The project also will benefit Nogales residents and businesses by reducing congestion on one of the community's primary roads.

"Moving large commercial trucks to the new flyover ramps will not only benefit the trucking industry but will improve traffic flow and make Mariposa Road safer for all," ADOT Director John Halikowski said.

The flyover ramps, which will connect with SR 189 west of Frank Reed Road, will increase safety for students of nearby Nogales High School. The project also includes a new roundabout at Target Range Road and improved drainage and traffic signals, among other improvements.

Local officials touted the project's importance not just for Nogales and Santa Cruz County but all of Arizona.

"During my first administration in 2011 we talked about ways to improve State Route 189, and now it's real," Nogales Mayor Arturo Garino said. "This is a very good project that is important for the city of Nogales and for the entire state of Arizona economically."

Bruce Bracker, a Santa Cruz County supervisor, called the improvements critical for the continued growth of the region. "The modernization of SR 189 will greatly help with congestion along the corridor and address major safety concerns, particularly with the grade-separation that will provide a safer environment for the high school traffic and traffic in general," Bracker said. "It is critical that we promote this project and attract new investment and create new jobs in our community."

Jaime Chamberlain, chairman of the Greater Nogales Santa Cruz County Port Authority and former chairman of the Fresh Produce Association of the Americas, said the work will support improvements to the Mariposa Port of Entry completed in 2014.

"This project also leverages the investment made by the Mexican government to modernize Highway 15, the highway that connects Arizona to Mexico City," Chamberlain said. "This is a major investment for Nogales and for Arizona. The future is bright for our community."

Ames Construction and Horrocks Engineers are the contractors on the project, with Ames leading construction and Horrocks leading design.

To learn more about the project, please visit azdot.gov/SR189.

https://www.ajnews.com/news/state/ducey-improving-sr-means-better-roads-better-future-for-arizona/article_1536f0a2-5e63-11ea-9ce1-97cfe1b17080.html

[Back to News Index](#)

South Texas lawmakers propose speeding up commercial traffic as Trump OKs adding border ag inspectors

[Sandra Sanchez](#) / Border Report

President Donald Trump has signed into law a bill by a South Texas congressman that will amp up the number of agricultural inspectors at ports of entry on the Southwest border and increase food product safety while helping speed up commercial vehicle crossings.

President Trump late Tuesday signed the [Protecting America's Food and Agriculture Act of 2019](#), which will allow for U.S. Customs and Border Protection to hire an additional 240 new agriculture specialists and 200 agriculture technicians until staffing shortages are resolved. It also allows for 20 new agriculture canine teams to be brought in over the next three years. The bill was proposed in the House by U.S. Rep. Filemon Vela, a Democrat from Brownsville, Texas, whose district has several international bridges. Republican Texas Sen. John Cornyn co-sponsored the bill.

Inspectors help carry out the Agricultural Quarantine and Inspection Program, which is jointly administered by CBP and the USDA to ensure that unwanted insects and [invasive pests](#) and foreign animal diseases like African swine fever don't enter U.S. soil, Vela said.

The U.S. agricultural sector brings in \$1 trillion in annual economic activity, much of which helps the South Texas communities through which these trucks pass, Vela said. [The Pharr International Bridge](#), for instance, where the majority of agricultural trucks cross into the Rio Grande Valley from Mexico, brings in over \$1.2 million in revenue each month. Over 50,000 commercial vehicles cross at this port every month, according to bridge reports.

"Texas relies on the trade and agricultural sectors," Vela said in a statement Wednesday. "We worked across the aisle, through both chambers, to ensure agriculture specialists and technicians at our ports of entry are adequately staffed to carry out critical agriculture quarantine inspections that safeguard America's agriculture sector from pests and foreign animal diseases. I know there is more work to be done and we will continue to work to ensure that our ports of entry have the resources they need to maintain and improve the safe flow of goods."

On Wednesday, Vela and fellow South Texas congressman, U.S. Rep. Vicente Gonzalez, a Democrat from McAllen, touted another measure they have filed that they claim would further streamline and expedite certain commercial agricultural vehicles that cross through South Texas. This new proposed bill, the [Promoting Agricultural Commerce Act](#), would grant an exemption to trucks carrying goods on Interstate 2 — the main east-to-west thoroughfare through South Texas that leads to many international bridges and ports. Under current statutes, truckers carrying goods on Interstate 2 may not surpass a certain weight, which forces cargo carriers to find alternative travel routes of travel that can add hours to their travel, cause trucks to meander through small residential communities, delay delivery of sensitive agricultural products, and affect commerce revenue, the lawmakers said.

“When our sugar growers alerted me to this costly and inefficient flaw in existing law, I knew we had to do something about it. I am optimistic that my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will join us in supporting South Texas agriculture by helping us move this bill through the legislative process,” Gonzalez said in a statement.

“We need this legislation to help our sugar industry to move their products in the most efficient manner,” said Vela, a senior member of the [House Agriculture Committee](#), who filed the additional legislation on Feb. 13.

Interstate 2 runs from the town of Penitas in western Hidalgo County, east to Harlingen in Cameron County. The route is being expanded and is scheduled to extend all the way east to Laredo, which is home to the busiest commercial trucking port in the nation where more than 2 million northbound commercial trucks pass through every year.

https://www.borderreport.com/hot-topics/trade/president-approves-adding-ag-inspectors-at-ports-south-texas-congressmen-propose-ways-to-speed-up-commercial-truck-crossings/?utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter BorderReport.com
[Back to News Index](#)

The extent of business mistrust in Mexico

Enrique Quintana / [Yucatan Times](#)

In his column at “[El Financiero Diario](#)”, Enrique Quintana explains the extent of business mistrust in Mexico. Mexican investors continue to look to the future with suspicion. The data released by the Inegi shows that the deterioration in business confidence has not reversed.

The business confidence index for the manufacturing sector fell by 0.8 points in February from January and was down 5.8 points from the same month last year.

The drop more pronounced among construction investors, with only those in commerce showing a slight recovery of 0.5 points from January but a decline of 3.1 points from a year ago.

Advertisement: 0:12

Another indicator released yesterday shows a trend in the same direction. This time around, it was the Banxico’s Private Sector Survey.

When asked if the time is right to make investments, only 9 percent answered positively, while 53 percent said it was the wrong time.

A more detailed review of the factors that most affect the contrary opinion of the experts is perceived to be those related to so-called governance, highlighting the problems of public security and internal political uncertainty.

Despite frequent visits by business leaders to the National Palace or even meetings of prominent businessmen with the President of the Republic, the typical Mexican businessman expresses reservations regarding internal policies.

It is not clear that the López Obrador government is aware that this is the situation that prevails in the business sector. It seems at times that various officials do know that there is uncertainty among broad layers of the business sector and propose measures to be taken to generate that confidence.

However, some officials dismiss that fact. They do not seem to care about this deterioration in confidence and almost see it as a positive sign of the significance of the Fourth Transformation (AMLO’s government)

History tells us that no government whose economic management fails can give continuity to its projects – at least while democracy prevails. And, if mistrust persists, coronavirus crisis or not, the economy is going to perform poorly in 2020.

What can make confidence return?

One of the factors that are in the air is the often-postponed announcement regarding the country’s energy infrastructure, which would give the private sector an option to invest in various areas of the oil and electricity industry. But this is not the only issue that can inspire confidence. In this space we have referred you many times that beyond ideological matters, there are particular matters that have to do with deficiencies in the functioning of the government and that involve dependencies such as COFEPRI, SEMARNAT, the commissions of the landowning sector, or CONAGUA, just to mention a few cases.

If the learning curve for various officials is completed in 2020, the results would be favorable, as various investment projects would continue, which would also add to the positive effect of T-MEC (USMCA)

If it turns out that the obstacles persist and the government’s operations are not streamlined, the mistrust and uncertainty will increase.

For the time being, as 2020 begins, most entrepreneurs are still not investing.

<https://www.theyucatatimes.com/2020/03/the-extent-of-business-mistrust-in-mexico/>
[Back to News Index](#)

Wastewater Is a Source of Valuable Water, Energy and Nutrients: How Do We Recover It?

Kate Zerrenner / CSR Wire

In a [study released last month](#), United Nations University's Institute for Water, Environment and Health found that large amounts of water, nutrients and energy are being flushed away, as it were, in the world's wastewater streams. Globally, we produce wastewater amounts equivalent to about five times what passes over Niagara Falls in a year. Contained in all that wastewater is enough energy to power all the households in the U.S. and Mexico, enough nutrients to meet 13 percent of global fertilizer needs, and enough water to fill Lake Ontario in four years, according to the study.

Those are staggering figures, but there are some next-step takeaways from the study that should not be overlooked.

We need more and better wastewater data

The study authors acknowledge that even with the impressive numbers they have compiled, data on wastewater is inconsistent or, in some cases, unavailable. This is a recurring problem in the water sector. A lot of assumptions have to be made because the data simply does not exist or is incomplete.

There is [inadequate data](#) on water in both developed and developing regions and at every level of the system, including leaks and losses, infrastructure, policy, quality, and more. To make better decisions, policymakers need more complete and accurate data. One of the ways better data can be gathered is through the deployment of smart water management, including [smart water grids](#)—which, like smart appliances or smart electric grids, can more accurately pinpoint flows, leaks and weaknesses.

Management and recovery should be better integrated

There's a saying in the energy-efficiency world that the longest distance is that between the boiler room and the board room. In other words: What the people at the data and operations level know is not necessarily what is talked about in the executive suites of utilities and cities.

Further, in cities in particular, sectors may be siloed, creating more inefficiencies. For example, a city may manage its water, energy and food issues under different jurisdictions that do not coordinate. Better integration would mean that, when addressing wastewater issues, relevant conversations could be had about withdrawing nutrients to help with agriculture or the development of biogas capture.

For example, the city of San Antonio, Texas, which utilizes municipally-owned water and electric utilities, has high-level coordination of the two sectors. Its [Crouse Water Recycling Center](#) is an example of their collaboration: In addition to providing 115 million gallons of recycled water daily, it also generates 1.5 million standard cubic feet of natural gas daily, and 80 percent of the resulting biosolids are processed for use as compost.

Policy and innovation go hand in hand

Smart water technologies continue to advance, but there is still more that needs to be done to develop net-zero energy and energy-positive technologies in the water and wastewater sector. All the innovation in the world will not be worth anything, however, if policymakers and industry leaders do not undertake the necessary changes to implement them. Often the barrier to solving water problems is [the lack of political and economic will](#), not a limitation in technology. Pay Drechsel of the International Water Management Institute in Sri Lanka, and one of the study's authors, noted: "For countries to progress, there is a need to invest in a supportive regulatory and financial environment toward a green economy, and to leverage private capital for resource recovery related business models that are financially feasible and increase cost recovery from municipal wastewater."

Innovation can provide the proof that pushes policymakers and business leaders to see the benefits of looking at the entire system. Wastewater is well situated to offer a case in point. Take, for example, [this textile mill in India](#), which needed a solution to a messy problem. The plant's wastewater contained elevated levels of dissolved solids, even after two rounds of treatment. Downstream farmers went to the government about the resulting waterway pollution, but the most obvious fix—a thermal water treatment system—was an expensive proposition for the textile mill.

Tina Arrowood, a principal research scientist at DuPont Water Solutions, worked with the mill to innovate a new system that made more economic sense. Based on proven reverse osmosis technology, the system her team created isn't just cheaper—it's also more robust and effective than thermal methods: The plant was able to recover more than 90 percent of the water for operational reuse, reducing the need for freshwater withdrawals, and recycle the salts for resale.

"Technology companies can learn from industries on the ground to create tailor-made solutions to problems," Arrowood told us. "Creating a circular economy in water-stressed regions can then help pay for systems" like the one used at the textile mill.

Innovations like these show proof of concept that can push policymakers to support creative responses to tough water problems. The U.N. University study presents some impressive figures, and there is every reason to believe we should be

able to take that data and do something meaningful with it. As our cities continue to grow and climate change advances, the pressures on our water supplies will increase. Innovative policy and economic solutions are already here for the taking.

https://www.csrwire.com/press_releases/43837-Wastewater-Is-a-Source-of-Valuable-Water-Energy-and-Nutrients-How-Do-We-Recover-It-
[Back to News Index](#)

Annova LNG signs lease with Port of Brownsville

Will Owen, Assistant Editor / LNG Industry

Annova LNG has held a signing ceremony with the Port of Brownsville leadership to celebrate the signing of a 30-year lease for more than 700 acres.

"We're thankful for the partnership we have with the Port of Brownsville, and the lease we signed spans a generation, demonstrating the long-term positive economic impact Annova LNG could bring to the Rio Grande Valley," said Omar Khayum, Annova LNG CEO.

"As a proven leader for attracting large scale industrial development, the Port of Brownsville welcomes new industry and good paying job creators like Annova LNG," said John Reed, Brownsville Navigation District Chairman. "This agreement is an investment for the future of the Rio Grande Valley and enhances our ability to support and create better economic opportunities for our region."

<https://www.lngindustry.com/liquid-natural-gas/03032020/annova-lng-signs-lease-with-port-of-brownsville/>
[Back to News Index](#)

Grupo Carso Mexico Natural Gas Pipeline Delayed but Relief in Permian Forecast as Wahalajara Nears Start

Christopher Lenton / Natural Gas Intel

Grupo Carso SAB de CV has once again pushed back the completion date of its 36-inch diameter, 472 MMcf/d Samalayuca-Sasabe pipeline, with startup now projected for September.

The 403-mile pipeline "is in the very last phase of construction," CEO Antonio Gómez García said last week during a quarterly earnings call. If everything goes well, "we will finish the construction around June, and the pipeline could be in operation maybe in August, September this year."

The pipeline, which had already been delayed for two years over a right-of-way dispute, had been expected to start up by the end of March. It was one of seven pipelines involved in contract renegotiations last year with anchor customer Comision Federal de Electricidad (CFE), Mexico's state-owned power company.

Grupo Carso's owner, billionaire Carlos Slim, was seen as key to brokering an agreement with the Mexican government that helped bring about new contracts and which ended the dispute in August.

The Samalayuca-Sasabe pipeline is seen as important to relieving some of the pent-up pressure on natural gas prices in West Texas, where takeaway capacity is insufficient to deal with booming associated gas production principally in the Permian Basin.

While the pipeline runs from east to west in northern Mexico and will not lead to additional imports of U.S. gas, Genscape Inc. analysts have said the delay prolongs about 0.25 Bcf/d of relief for the Permian, arguing that the pipeline "provides an alternative, cheaper, more direct route for Permian molecules to flow to northwestern Mexican markets." West Texas gas prices meanwhile continue to take a beating. They saw steep discounts across the board on Monday, recalling the unprecedented low prices Permian producers endured last spring. Prices at Waha plummeted 85.5 cents on Monday to average minus 66.5 cents.

Energy expert Eduardo Prud'homme told NGI's Mexico GPI that the Samalayuca-Sasabe pipeline delay won't however have a serious impact on the operation of the Mexican national pipeline system.

"The reasoning of this pipeline was getting Waha gas to supply the Pacific Coast in a more direct way." But, he says, natural gas demand has been limited in the area to CFE power plants and hasn't budged.

That could of course change quickly if the two planned liquified natural gas export plants for the area, Energía Costa Azul and Puerto Libertad, are developed. Final investment decisions on both are expected soon.

Also complicating gas supply on Mexico's western shores is the stalled 510 MMcf/d Guaymas-El Oro natural gas pipeline, which has been inactive since August 2017 after members of the Loma de Bácum faction of the indigenous Yaqui tribe removed a section of the pipe in protest of its construction.

Wahalajara Relief

One piece of good news for Permian producers is that the final segment of the Wahalajara system, the 0.9 Bcf/d Villa de Reyes-Aguascalientes-Guadalajara pipeline, is to be complete by the end of the month, a spokesperson for developer Fermaca told NGI's Mexico GPI.

In December, the 453-kilometer (281-mile), 1.3 Bcf/d La Laguna-Aguascalientes pipeline, the first part of the system, began commercial operation. When the system is fully functional, it would move gas from Waha to Mexico's industrial heart of Guadalajara.

Natural gas exports to Mexico grew by 10.2% to 1.38 Tcf, or 5.1 Bcf/d, in the first nine months of last year, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Genscape analysts had predicted that the start of the Wahalajara system could increase the flows to about 5.7 Bcf/d.

<https://www.naturalgasintel.com/articles/121223-grupo-carso-mexico-natural-gas-pipeline-delayed-but-relief-in-permian-forecast-as-wahalajara-nears-start>

[Back to News Index](#)

California Wants Feds To Address Cross-Border Sewage

Erik Anderson / KPBS

State water pollution regulators in San Diego are asking federal officials to do more monitoring of cross-border water flows that could be polluted.

The San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board issued an investigative order in February that requires more monitoring of sewage-tainted cross-border flows.

Observers say the situation at the border has deteriorated since the beginning of last year.

A series of pump failures and clogs have allowed between 10 and 50 million gallons of sewage-tainted water to flow into the United States every day.

The flows happen even when there is no rainfall.

"We're waiting to see if IBWC will indeed choose to comply with that investigative order, or will they challenge it in federal court or through some other means. We'll see," Gibson said. "In the meantime, though, with the permit re-issuance we're already translating those monitoring requirements from the technical report into permanent monitoring we would propose for the permit itself."

A state lawsuit asking the federal government to clean up the pollution is on hold, while local officials wait for the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency to decide whether the federal government will help fund major infrastructure improvements on this side of the border.

Meanwhile, the regional board is also in the process of tightening the pollution requirements of the federal government's international wastewater plant permits, as a way to compel the federal government to capture and clean tainted cross-border flows.

For interview: <https://www.kpbs.org/news/2020/mar/03/california-wants-feds-address-cross-border-sewage/>

[Back to News Index](#)

US agents discover illegal smuggling tunnel spanning 30-feet running under the US and Mexico border

Staff /BRINKWIRE

US agents have discovered yet another illegal smuggling tunnel connecting the US and Mexico, just one month after authorities found the longest tunnel ever along the Southwest border.

Border Patrol agents unearthed the 30-foot long drug smuggling route running into Nogales, southern Arizona, this week.

The tunnel, running under the US-Mexico border, was found by Arizona Customs and Border Protection agents.

Its discovery marks the third underground smuggling tunnel to be intercepted by US authorities since December and comes just one month after agents found the longest cross-border tunnel on record, stretching three-quarters of a mile long.

In January, authorities announced the discovery of the passage stretching from an industrial site in Tijuana, Mexico, to the San Diego area.

Its length – more than 14 football fields – made it the longest illegal cross-border route ever discovered, shocking authorities.

The tunnel featured an extensive rail cart system, forced air ventilation, high voltage electrical cables and panels, an elevator at the tunnel entrance and a drainage system.

It was discovered by Mexican authorities in a Tijuana parking lot for cargo trucks, next to the city's airport.

US authorities mapped its course, drilled a hole on the US side and lowered a camera to determine where to start making their way through.

The latest tunnel is less sophisticated than the last, with only enough space for one person to crawl through, a CBP official told ABC News.

They said smugglers had built the passage along an extensive sewage system running under Nogales' sister city Sonora on the Mexican side of the border, to make it more difficult to detect.

Authorities have now filled the tunnel with concrete.

No arrests have yet been made in connection to the newest discovery.

US and Mexican authorities have been coordinating their searches for tunnels between the two nations in efforts to clamp down on illegal drug trafficking.

However, tensions have been mounting as President Trump's administration has plowed on with the erection of his border wall between the US and Mexico.

Trump had initially demanded that Mexico pay for the wall but it has so far been funded entirely by the US government, according to reports this month from The Washington Post.

Trump's 'Remain in Mexico' policy has also been blamed for leaving tens of thousands of asylum seekers vulnerable to the dangers of the towns along the Mexican border.

Authorities have found 15 sophisticated tunnels on California's border with Mexico since 2006, with hallmarks including lighting, ventilation, railway tracks and hydraulic lifts.

The tunnels are largely concentrated in Otay Mesa, an area where clay-like soil is conducive to digging and warehouses provide cover.

While no drugs have been seized in many cases, customs officials have reported a spike in the trafficking of opioids such as Fentanyl into the US – which have been blamed for the US opioid crisis.

The drug smuggling routes expose the limitations of Trump's border wall, which stretches several feet underground in the area and is considered effective against small, crudely-built tunnels often called 'gopher holes.'

<https://en.brinkwire.com/us/us-agents-discover-illegal-smuggling-tunnel-spanning-30-feet-running-under-the-us-and-mexico-border/>

[Back to News Index](#)

COLUMN: USMCA not necessarily better than NAFTA

Brent Been | Guest Columnist / ENID News

President George H.W. Bush once spoke of the need to establish a free trade zone from the Yukon to the Yucatan. The idea of a trade pact between the United States, Canada, and Mexico that called for an elimination of, virtually, all tariff and trade restrictions became a reality when President William Jefferson Clinton signed the North American Free Trade Agreement into law on Dec 8, 1993.

It has been said that like war, politics makes strange bedfellows, and NAFTA is certainly no exception. The big business corporate executives were backing a Democratic president on a trade agreement that did not have the endorsement of the environmentalists who raised concerns about Mexico's lax environmental standards. Certainly, the labor unions of the U.S. and Canada did not share the same enthusiasm for NAFTA as the corporate sector did. Corporate executives could see nothing but gain in a Western Hemisphere free trade zone. After all, if you can reduce your taxes then it stands to reason that you can increase your profits.

President Donald Trump called NAFTA the "worst trade deal for our country!" and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi did argue how the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement is "much better than NAFTA." The USMCA will be a boon for the automotive industry as it requires 75 percent of motor vehicle parts to be assembled by workers earning \$16 per hour. Many Americans were concerned about what third party candidate Ross Perot once said regarding "a giant sucking sound" of American jobs because of big business shuttering operations in the U.S. The USMCA is a way in which the American worker can labor on the assembly line on a much more level playing field.

Bush, like Clinton, saw the need to maximize our economic relationship with Canada and Mexico, as the two nations are already the two biggest markets for farmers and ranchers. The environmentalists, who have denounced NAFTA, were not as satisfied as many Democrats, even though the USMCA includes \$600 million in order to deal with sewage

spillovers from Tijuana. And the Sierra Club claims that the USMCA will be even worse than they had originally anticipated.

Possibly, one loser in the USMCA could be in the realm of biopharmaceutical research and development. The lack of protections for biologic drugs is something Democratic lawmakers negotiated, and the pharma sees the potential for the foreign governments to steal America's intellectual property.

What really hits the American worker on a gut level is the issue of job displacement, and so the skepticism and denouncement by many rings all too clear for those who have been a victim of cheaper Mexican labor, yet NAFTA was not the only trade deal penned in the 1990s. And lest we forget that automation also impacted manufacturing jobs in the U.S., as well. Advocacy groups cite numbers of jobs lost since NAFTA was established, yet the U.S. Chamber of Commerce will argue that there is an abundance of jobs which are supported by the amount of trade that has occurred since 1994.

With two major trading nations to our north and south, the USMCA that was crafted is not NAFTA 2.0, but a "new and improved" NAFTA. However, the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, which represents 600,000 active and retired members in North American aerospace, defense, manufacturing, transportation, woodworking, and the federal sector, does not see the USMCA as acceptable because it does not address the continued outsourcing of hundreds of thousands of jobs to Mexico.

https://www.enidnews.com/oklahoma/column-usmca-not-necessarily-better-than-nafta/article_d1f234b1-f42f-5ec4-b3e1-8b3a60f0ec20.html

[Back to News Index](#)
